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HOW TO STUDY

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR
STUDENTS

BY

ARTHUR W. KORNHAUSER



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HOW TO STUDY

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PREFACE

This booklet was prepared to meet the needs of freshmen students in the School of Commerce and Administration of the University of Chicago. The material is sufficiently general, however, to be widely applicable to other groups of college and high-school students.

The attempt to help students improve their study-methods is not something new. Many books and articles are in print on the subject. But a survey of available material reveals nothing in the form of brief and direct suggestions specially adapted to college students. The present booklet attempts to fill this gap.

The contents of the following pages are the result of several years' experimentation with material for aiding freshmen in their methods of study. During 1923-24 the material was used substantially in its present form and was found helpful by large numbers of students.

Sets of printed rules cannot, of course, take the place of more personal and continuous instruction in study methods by teachers and advisers. Diagnosis of individual difficulties and careful directing of work over long periods is to be recommended wherever possible. Classroom guidance in studying may likewise be made highly valuable. The present booklet is in no sense a substitute for these more fundamental ways of teaching students how to study. It aims to serve merely as a supplement.

One word of advice is added for students who come to this booklet for help. The advice is: Use the suggestions! Merely skimming the pages which follow will

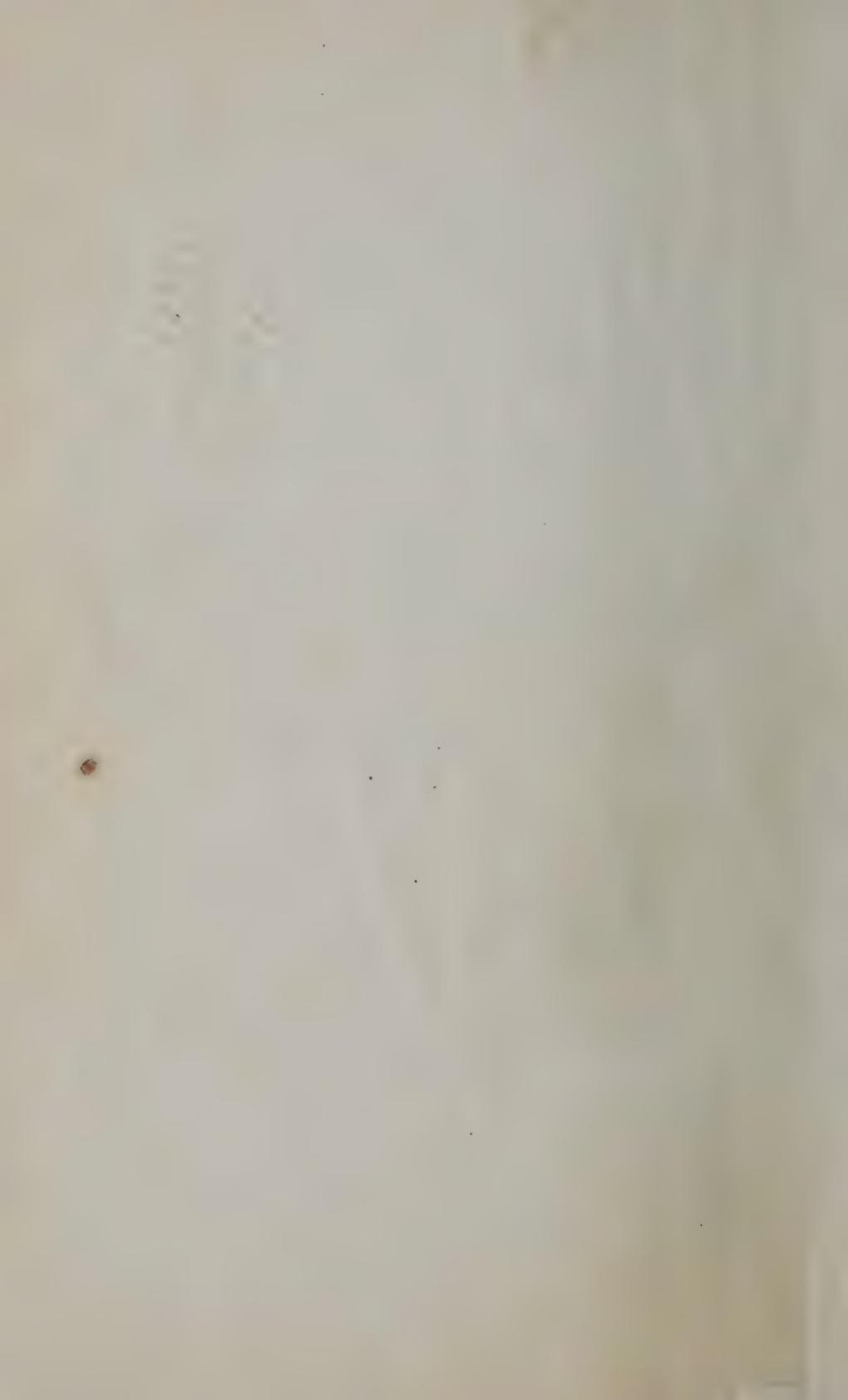
do no good. Stop at every new point and inquire carefully whether the suggestion is applicable in your own studying. Figure out just how you will apply the rule, and then apply it. All the rules are not equally important and all of them do not need attention from any one person. Find out which ones you need most and then hammer away persistently at those. Return to the booklet from time to time to check your methods and remind yourself of the many possibilities of improvement. Effective study methods can be made habitual only through a steady and vigorous campaign.

The student is strongly advised to go beyond the present rules and suggestions. To this end, a list of references for further reading is given at the end of the booklet.

A. W. K.

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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF STUDY

There are two aims in study: one is to acquire certain bodies of knowledge; the other is to acquire certain abilities to do things. We study history to gain a knowledge of ancient Greece or of pre-war Germany; we study arithmetic or French to gain an ability to solve problems or read French books. Clearly there is no sharp line between these two kinds of study. Knowledge is bound to play some part in guiding future thought and action; it is part of our ability to do. Likewise, our study of how to do things always involves the assimilation of some necessary knowledge. In acquiring new facts we always use our ability to think, and in learning how to act and think in a new field we must always acquire bodies of facts. There remains, however, a difference in emphasis between studying to acquire knowledge and studying to acquire the ability to use knowledge and to do things.

Major emphasis undoubtedly belongs on the side of developing our abilities. College education should increase our powers and capacities—our abilities to work and play, to vote and manage men, to read and to think, to organize a business, or plead a case, or cure disease. This does not minimize the place of knowledge. True, knowledge is made subordinate to the ability to use knowledge, but it is an indispensable subordinate. Intelligent thought and action always have sound knowledge as their basis.

One of the most valuable abilities to be developed is the *ability to study*—the ability to carry on the intellectual labor necessary to solve a problem, think through a question, or master a method of doing something. To learn to study effectively is far more important than to acquire particular bodies of information. If a college education develops a true power to study, it has succeeded though it do nothing else. If the student does not learn how to study, his college course has left its biggest job undone.

Study includes not only what we gain from books and the classroom, but it involves also our acquisitions through direct observation and through actual performance. To know how to study necessarily means to know how to think, to observe, to concentrate, to organize and analyze, to be mentally efficient. Viewed broadly, study includes all investigation and research. It is the application of intelligence to the task of understanding and controlling the world about us. In learning to study we are learning to think and to live.

Study in college is to a great extent study from books and lectures. This is true simply because in this way stores of knowledge and points of view can be acquired which it would be impossible or too laborious to collect at first hand. Due to this central position of books and classroom work in college study, the following pages can be profitably limited to these forms of learning.

Investigations have repeatedly demonstrated the possibility of students improving the effectiveness of their study. It is a matter of developing “good form” in reading, listening, observing, thinking. Proper methods are as essential here as in football, typewriting, or golf.

The pages which follow suggest some ways of developing "good form" in studying from books and in the classroom.

The material is written for students who really desire to improve their methods. For the student who does not feel the need of learning to study, little can be done. If he has not the desire to study (and study means in college chiefly book and lecture study), he may well ask himself seriously whether it is wise for him to spend valuable years of his life in college. But the student who feels an honest desire to do college work and who believes that he really belongs in college, may find in the booklet some useful hints for improvement.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENT FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY

All specific advice concerning how to read, how to take notes, how to tackle problems, how to form good study habits, is secondary. There is one fundamental and indispensable requirement for effective study more basic than any rules or technique. Without it real study is impossible though everything else be favorable; with it results can be achieved even in ignorance of all the fine points of how to study. This key requirement is a *driving motive*, an intense desire to learn and to achieve, an interest in things intellectual, a "will to do" in your college work. If you would learn to study, first develop a feeling that you *want* to master your studies and that you *will* master them. All else is subordinate to that.

How can this spirit be acquired? First, by building up definite ambitions and ideals toward which your studies lead; by recognizing frankly the consequences of poor work and the rewards of good work. Picture clearly to yourself the satisfaction that will come with success, and the disappointment that failure will bring. Many a student has been transformed from indifference and a merely "getting by" policy to an attitude of earnest and energetic effort by some emergency that aroused him to think seriously of himself and his future. Ask yourself, now and then, what you are in school for and toward what goal you are moving. A little thought given to

yourself and the things you are working for is an excellent incentive to serious study.

The drive that makes true study possible comes, in the second place, from interest inherent in the subject studied. Hand in hand with the development of the major purposes and responsiveness to external incentives just mentioned, interests must grow up about particular problems and topics—desires to study these things for their own sake. Here are four rules for developing interest in a subject:

1. **Acquire information about the subject;** you will be interested in the things about which you know many facts. You become interested in professional baseball or in radio as you learn more and more details in each field. The same is true of your school subjects.
2. **Tie the new information to your old bodies of knowledge;** discover relations of new facts to old matters of interest. Historic events take on new interest when they are seen in relation to present issues. Physics and chemistry become interesting when you see their application in everyday life.
3. **Make the new information personal.** Relate it to matters of real concern to *you*. This material on "how to study," for example, has interest for you only as you think how it may aid *you*.
4. **Use the new knowledge;** think and talk and write about it; make it play a part in your action; take the relevant material from one class into other classes. Discuss difficult and questionable points with your friends and classmates. Think out the implications and consequences of new ideas obtained in your studies.

Part of your study in college will be done with eager interest. It is no longer work. There is real pleasure and

fascination in it. The studying goes forward concentratedly, overcoming distractions and requiring no effort or will power. It is like reading a novel or seeing a movie. The greater the proportion of your study that is of this sort the better. Any study will in time take on this intrinsic interest if only you "stay with it" and try to make it an active part of your thinking.

But some studies are bound to be uninteresting at the beginning and parts of these studies will continue to be uninteresting. What is most interesting for one student may be least interesting for another. Nevertheless, there are certain matters all students must master, whether the topics appear interesting or not. Here it is that one must take himself in hand, appreciate the necessities and rewards involved, and then make effective his will to succeed in the subject.

Several important hints can be given for gaining the decisiveness that is essential in carrying good resolutions into actual practice. Most students have excellent intentions and high purposes in their study. But somehow the doing lags far behind the desiring.

The following rules will help:

1. **Feel intensely the urge to do the task before you.**
Make clear to yourself the relation of the present task to your larger goals and ambitions. Think how success or failure in this particular case will affect your future, your attitude toward yourself, and the feelings of those interested in you. There are hundreds of motives for study. Bring them strongly into play.
2. **Make your task definite.** Decide just what is to be done and just when it is to be done. Break the whole job up if it is discouragingly large. See exactly what is

involved in the first part and do that. Concentrate on the definite piece of work before you.

3. **Begin work!** Get started at all costs. Turn your attention away from the imagined difficulties and the other things that you would rather be doing. Keep clearly before you this one job. Forget everything else. Once you get well started, interest will develop in the subject-matter itself and you will no longer need to hold yourself to the work by sheer force. If you have difficulty getting down to work, a fourth rule will help.
4. **Get set for study.** Sit down in a favorable place for studying; open your books; take your pencil and paper. In a word, go through the motions.
5. **Concentrate. Check every tendency to daydream.** Mind-wandering is the greatest enemy to study. One hour of concentrated study is worth ten with frequent lapses. Work intensely while you work. Guard vigilantly against mind-wandering, and pull yourself back sharply on every occasion. Working under favorable conditions and developing an interest in your studies are the surest ways of securing concentrated work. Mind-wandering is very frequently due to inadequate understanding of words or to a deficient background in the present subject. Where this is the trouble, it *always* pays to go back and provide the necessary foundation at whatever pains.

CHAPTER III

CONDITIONS FAVORABLE FOR CONCENTRATION

Effective study demands concentration. The ability to concentrate is largely governed by the individual's surroundings and by his own physical condition. Being absorbed in study is being oblivious to everything else. Learning to concentrate is learning to overcome distractions. The distractions to be withstood are of three kinds: distractions in the surroundings (noise, glare of lights, etc.), distractions arising in one's body (feeling of fatigue, headache, etc.), and distractions in the form of irrelevant ideas. The problem of study is in no small measure the problem of dealing successfully with these distractions.

Many distractions are best dealt with by elimination. The student who wishes to do concentrated work can best begin by doing away with all unnecessary distracting influences. As regards external distractions this means choosing a study place as free as possible from all sorts of noises, conversations, moving objects and people, glaring lights, bright colors, varied or novel objects, and all disturbing features of the surroundings. On the side of bodily distractions, it means the avoidance of undue fatigue, the maintaining of sound health and bodily vigor, freedom from digestive disorders, precautions to prevent eyestrain, and provision for comfortable conditions with respect to light, heat, and ventilation. Care should

be taken, too, to have one's chair and work arranged so as to avoid any unnecessary strain.

Many detailed instructions fall under these broad generalizations. A very few of the more important rules follow:

1. **Study in a quiet room whenever possible.** It should be relatively free from visual distractions as well as noises.
2. **See that your place of study is properly lighted, heated, and ventilated.** The light should, above everything else, not shine directly into your eyes or be visible "out of the corner of your eye." Also avoid a glaring reflection from the pages of your book. The temperature is ordinarily to be kept between 65° and 68°. Ventilation should be good but, of course, without draft.
3. **Arrange your chair and work to avoid strain and fatigue.** Shift your position from time to time. Be comfortable—but avoid being too comfortable. It is almost impossible to study strenuously when one is settled back in a large easy-chair or is reclining freely on a couch.
4. **Keep yourself in good physical condition.** Do not hesitate to consult your medical adviser for suggestions. *Be careful of your eating.* Eat at regular times. Eat slowly. Eat with friends whenever you can. Make your mealtime a recreation period. Avoid heavy meals at noon and never begin study immediately after eating. *Get sufficient sleep at all costs.* Even if it means carrying fewer courses, it will pay in the long run to avoid cutting in on your sleep. If you have difficulty going to sleep, do something to take your mind off your work and to let you relax before retiring. A little light reading, a warm bath, a walk, a conversation, a letter to family or friends, often help. If you are much bothered by sleeplessness, consult your medical adviser. Manage to get some

regular exercise and recreation. Remember that a little exercise *regularly* is infinitely more valuable than occasional "exercise sprees."

Not all distractions can be done away with. Hence the student must learn to concentrate in spite of them. He must depend upon his interest in his studies and his ability to hold himself to his work despite the difficulties. Mind-wandering or the distraction by irrelevant ideas must be attacked in the way suggested in chapter ii—by vigilant and persistent determination to check every irrelevant train of thought. Developing interest in the subject and application of the rules given above will aid.

CHAPTER IV

SYSTEM AND REGULARITY IN STUDY; STUDY HABITS

In school work, as in business or military campaigns, it is essential to have a plan of action. The student who "budgets" his day and then adheres to his program eliminates half the effort and worry from his work. A plan that is steadily followed soon becomes the easy and natural routine of the day. Studying comes to *belong* in one's life as fully as dressing in the morning or being on hand for dinner. A fixed program of study is one of the greatest aids in making one's work smooth-running and effective. The value of systematic plans is well expressed in a recent book by B. C. Ewer:

If we have several duties confronting us simultaneously, it is only too likely that we shall fail to do any of them. They seem to get in each other's way. The pressure of each prevents us from giving ourselves whole-heartedly to any, or we turn in a futile fashion from one to another, dropping each as soon as it is begun. A previous declaration, however, such as that we will begin to answer those letters at half-past seven o'clock or that we will take up a certain matter of business next Thursday at nine, settles it. The proper set of the brain is established, other tendencies are frustrated in advance, and when the time comes we almost automatically do the thing appointed. Those whose occupations leave them largely to their own initiative learn that their salvation depends upon regularly making some sort of a day-plan.

The details of the daily time schedule must be determined by each individual for himself. Decide how many hours you will give to your studies. Avoid being too heroic in your plans. A careful estimate is needed of your actual capacity for work. Try neither to overestimate nor to underestimate the time to be given to study. Next, select the time of day which you prefer for intellectual work. Be sure it is a time that you can use uninterruptedly *every day*. You may wish to use two or three different study periods during the day. To do so is excellent—provided you form the habit of studying at these times regularly.

The amount of time to be given to each subject must also be settled, and likewise the order in which the studies will be tackled. You cannot, of course, determine in advance exactly how long each assignment will require or at what time precisely you can take up your next study. Study habits cannot be perfectly rigid. But it is well each day to plan the approximate time for your assignments and the order in which you will do them. You can, in this way, entirely avoid the serious difficulties of "not knowing what to do first" and of worrying about the other things you "ought to be doing."

Few students know where their time goes. An accurate knowledge of how your days are spent at present is a first long step toward living up to a more effective daily schedule. A convenient form is shown here for keeping an hourly record of your day's activities. Make a number of copies of this card and fill one in each night before retiring. You will soon gain some interesting facts about your use of time. These daily reports will also serve as a convincing record of the improvement you are making through laying out your program of work each day.

NAME _____

Rising hour _____ Retiring hour _____ Date _____

Account of time between rising hour and 8:00

HOUR	ACTIVITY	COMMENT
8:00- 9:00		
9:00-10:00		
10:00-11:00		
11:00-12:00		
12:00- 1:30		
1:30- 2:30		
2:30- 3:30		
3:30- 4:30		
4:30- 6:00		

Account of time between 6:00 and retiring hour

SUMMARY OF DAY

Number of hours of sleep (preceding rising hour). . . .

Number of hours recreation and rest (after rising hour) _____

Number of hours physical exercise or work

Number of hours taken for meals.

Number of hours mental work

A definite *place* to study is no less important than a definite time. Have a particular table and a particular chair which are always used for study and intellectual work. This place will come to *mean* study. To sit down in that particular spot and at your regular time will automatically lead you to assume a readiness for work.

The cultivation of system and regularity in work is held by many to be the secret of success. Sir William Osler, one of the greatest men in the medical profession, addresses the following question to a body of students: "How can you take the greatest possible advantage of your capacities with the least possible strain?" He answers his question in this way:

By cultivating system. I say cultivating advisedly, since some of you will find the acquisition of systematic habits very hard. There are minds congenitally systematic; others have a lifelong fight against an inherited tendency to diffuseness and carelessness in work. Take away with you, from a man who has had to fight a hard battle, the profound conviction of the value of system in your work. I appeal to the freshmen especially, because you today make a beginning, and your future career depends very much upon the habits you will form during this session. To follow the routine of the classes is easy enough, but to take routine into every part of your daily life is a hard task. Let each hour of the day have its allotted duty, and cultivate that power of concentration which grows with its exercise, so that the attention neither flags nor wavers, but settles with a bull-dog tenacity on the subject before you. Constant repetition makes a good habit fit easily in your mind, and by the end of the session you may have gained that most precious of all knowledge—the power to work.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE METHODS IN READING

Most studying in college consists of reading. The development of the ability to study is to a great extent a matter of learning to read effectively. This, so far as study is concerned, means learning to read quickly and learning to read thoroughly. Usually an assignment is best mastered by combining a preliminary rapid survey with a more careful and thoughtful second reading. You should train yourself in both abilities. The next two chapters will deal with these two topics—rapid reading and thorough reading.

Some general rules for developing reading methods that underlie effective study are given in the present chapter.

1. **Think about the topic of study before beginning to read.**
Prepare your mind. Ask yourself how this reading fits into the work of the course. How is it related to preceding topics? What problem is it trying to answer? Ask also, how much you already know about this subject. Recall, from your previous reading and study and from your experience, knowledge that bears upon the reading. Formulate questions to put to the author. Think how *you* would develop the subject.
2. **Become acquainted with the reading at the outset.** Obtain a preliminary rapid impression of a book or a reading just as you do of a lecturer. Note the title, the author, the author's position and his other writings,

the year the book was written, the preface, the table of contents, and the manner of presentation. Form an idea of the value of the book or article. Decide what you expect it to give you. Note the author's plan and keep this in mind as you read.

3. Read rapidly through your assignment, first, to get a bird's-eye view of the whole. Neglect details. Try to get the broad sweep of the reading as a whole. With a little practice you can learn to skim very quickly through even long assignments and get the main ideas. In many books you will find a number of examples given to illustrate each principle. Once you are certain you have grasped the principle, the examples need not detain you. *Reading through your lessons twice may seem unnecessary and a waste of time. It isn't. In the long run you will find that it not only leads to better mastery of your subjects but it actually saves time as well.* (Chapter vii deals with the development of ability to read rapidly.)
4. Read your assignment a second time more slowly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully. You will find that the details are far more meaningful and more readily grasped by reason of the preceding rapid survey. Keep the main idea in mind and see all the subordinate points in relation to this central thought. Parts of a reading which by themselves are often obscure and difficult become clear when they are related to the underlying idea. Knowing what comes later will save you many minutes of perplexity and mind-wandering. In your thorough reading, much time must be spent in thinking. *Go beyond the book.* Forge new links and create new examples. Treat the author critically; make him justify his statements and points of view. Tie the present discussion to your previous thinking in the subject. Make it part of *your thinking.* Use the material in your conversations

and discussions. (Chapter vi deals in greater detail with methods to be used in thorough reading.)

5. Make note of the important points in your reading; mark your book or take notes. In your thorough reading, when you come to an important point, underline it, or make a mark or note in the margin of your book, or jot down the point in your notebook. At the end of each paragraph or set of paragraphs, stop and think over what you have read, and summarize it in a marginal note or by marking the author's words. Note-taking is valuable both at the time you think out and record the points and at later times when you wish to review or refer to the topic.

Review your notes before proceeding to your new assignment each day. This requires only a few minutes and is extraordinarily valuable. Where your notes are not perfectly clear, where they do not awaken a definite idea of the point, turn to the original reading and refresh your thinking. This use of notes insures your building each lesson on a sound foundation.

6. Be certain your knowledge is clear and "thought through." Be self-critical toward your acquisitions of knowledge. Many students are too easily satisfied with themselves. While you cannot hope to learn a great deal about any subject in a short time, see that the little you do learn is clear and definite. Avoid, above everything else, an acceptance of vague and muddy ideas. The habit of getting "smatterings" of subjects spells intellectual ruin. Far rather get a *few fundamental ideas* from a course or a book and have them *clearly* than get scores of "half-baked" notions.

CHAPTER VI

TRAINING ONE'S SELF TO READ THOROUGHLY

It is almost always desirable to skim through a book or assignment hurriedly before tackling it in a thoroughgoing fashion. If the book is not of much value the preliminary reading suffices. If it is worth a more careful reading, the rapid survey will be most helpful in giving the essential ideas and point of view into which the detailed subject-matter can be fitted.

It is assumed, moreover, that even before you skim a book or article you will perform the indispensable preparations. You will, that is, *think* about the topic and formulate questions and problems which the reading is to solve. You will glance over your notes from previous reading and class discussion that bear upon, or lead up to, this subject. You will also become familiar with the book or article by finding out something of the author and the nature of this piece of writing.

Your careful and intensive reading should always be preceded by these several steps. First, think over the topic you are about to study and form an idea of what you expect to find out. Second, introduce yourself to the author and book. Third, skim hurriedly through your assignment to gain a bird's-eye view of the whole and a notion of the author's plan. After these preparations are completed you are ready to read the matter thoroughly.

1. **Keep the purpose of the reading in mind as you read.**
See how the points fit in with the main purpose and support it. When you find your mind wandering, stop and recall your problem, relating it to the passage you are reading.
2. **Be sure you have the main thought of each paragraph.**
Stop at the end of each paragraph or division of the subject and recall in your own words the central thought of that section. Ask yourself questions about it. See what relation it bears to the main problem and to the points that precede it. If the paragraph is not clear, go back and take each sentence alone; if a sentence is not clear, take each phrase and word. If you are certain you understand the main thought of the paragraph, however, do not waste your time on single phrases and sentences. Stopping to recall what you have just read is the best way to be sure that you are getting the thought. Recall during reading may appear wasteful. Actually, however, it has been demonstrated to add greatly to efficiency in study. Even when you are pressed for time, stop frequently in your studying to think over what you have read. You will master far more than by straight-away reading.
3. **Use judgment in the time you give to the different points in your reading. Vary the rate of your reading.**
Read the important and difficult points slowly, making sure you understand them. Read the familiar points rapidly. Skip over the points that have no significance for your present purpose. The secret of study is to seize upon the important and the difficult parts and concentrate upon them.
4. **Think critically in your reading. Draw your own conclusions. Go beyond the book.** Spend a large part of your study time thinking over the material you

read rather than merely memorizing the points. Too many students accept blindly as truth whatever they see on a printed page. A safer attitude is one that carefully weighs and considers the facts, opinions, and theories that are read. Nothing is true simply because it is in a book. Nor is it either true or false merely because it fits in, or fails to fit in, with your previous notions. Above everything else, cultivate an open-minded attitude toward the subject of your reading. Be ready to believe, but not too readily. Examine the evidence and the reasoning back of an author's conclusions. Be willing to suspend judgment where you are not convinced.

In thinking over what you are reading, ask yourself such questions as these: Is the writer citing facts accurately? Does he distinguish between facts and opinions? Do his conclusions follow necessarily from his evidence? Do his conclusions agree with your own independent views? By considering these questions you will come to conclusions of your own, whether they happen to agree with the author's or not. Be sure, however, to view your own conclusions as tentative and subject to change.

Your thinking must do more than arrive at critical conclusions. Find illustrations and applications of the points read. Think what further conclusions follow. What are the implications of the author's view? What light does this reading throw on other problems you have been struggling with? Let your new reading continually stimulate thought on a host of related topics.

5. Record the main thought of each division of your reading. Mark the important points in the reading as you come to them. The simplest way of marking the passages is to draw a line beside them. If the passage is especially important, draw a double line beside it. Use an

interrogation mark beside points which you are not sure about, or where you wish to make further inquiries. Other special marks may be adopted at will, but it is important to have a uniform system in all your reading. When you stop to think over paragraphs which you have just read, summarize the central idea in a brief marginal note. Record, also, questions that occur to you and points where you take issue with the writer. Taking critical notes and marking passages will *force* you to think and to pick out the essential points. It will also aid greatly when you come to review or refer to the points in your reading.

6. Make a mental (or written) outline of the material as you read; then review the entire reading with this outline in mind. The thoughts of the different sections must be interrelated. Organize the material into main points and subpoints. Obtain a clear picture of the *entire* topic. A jumble of disconnected facts and opinions is useless. See the subject in the large. Group the details under the important thoughts. Think over the reading with your outline as a guide. Where you are not clear, turn to the book and re-read. Change the outline if necessary. In the end, be sure that you see the subject as an organized whole.

CHAPTER VII

TRAINING ONE'S SELF TO READ RAPIDLY

The student who can read rapidly saves an immense amount of time in his studying. This ability is particularly valuable in certain kinds of reading: (1) Rapid reading is a necessity when you have to go through a mass of reading to find material on some special point. The library work involved in preparing a report or term paper usually demands this sort of reading. You wish to find all that you can about a particular man or movement in a score of different history books; or you are to hunt through a vast literature to find the origin and development of some invention or some theory. (2) Rapid reading is a great asset, too, when you are trying to gain simply the general thought or fundamental argument of a piece of writing. Often, for example, you wish to compare the points of view of two authors, or you seek a sketchy familiarity with some field which you have not time to explore carefully. (3) Most important of all, rapid reading is valuable in your ordinary daily studying as a means of obtaining a preliminary bird's-eye view of your topic. The usefulness of a hurried first reading—to be followed by thorough studying—was emphasized in chapters v and vi.

Most students can with a little effort greatly increase the speed of their reading. Experiments show that it is not unusual for a person to improve from 50 to 100 per cent in his speed of reading without any loss in the compreh-

hension of the ideas read. Actual evidence does not support the common belief that slow readers make up for their slowness by more thorough comprehension. In general it is true, rather, that individuals who learn to read rapidly lose almost nothing in their comprehension. They obtain almost as many ideas per page as the slower reader, and they obtain, of course, very many more ideas per minute.

Some definite rules for improving your speed of reading follow:

1. **Keep forcing yourself to read rapidly.** Put forth a strong and persistent effort. Urge yourself continually to speed up. Simple as this sounds, it is the most important of all rules for increasing your reading speed. Continuous effort will very soon bring results, even though you ignore all other rules. Begin today forcing yourself to read rapidly. At first your comprehension of ideas will be interfered with. But with persistent daily practice you can soon learn to grasp ideas with remarkable quickness. Do not mind the mistakes and omissions that occur while you are learning. Read over your lesson *rapidly* two or three times if necessary to get the main ideas, then read carefully for details.
2. **Read phrases and sentences, not words.** Many people pronounce words to themselves in silent reading almost as distinctly as though they were reading aloud. This habit can best be overcome by the vigorous application of rule 1. The separate pronunciation of words becomes impossible when you speed up the rate of reading. Learn to leap from phrase to phrase and from sentence to sentence. Trust that later sentences will clear up points that remain obscure. *Read for ideas, not words.*
3. **Learn to skip wisely.** “*Hit the high spots.*” Do not be afraid to skip phrases, sentences, and even whole

paragraphs, provided you have caught the drift of the author's thought. (Remember that you are going to re-read the matter if it is something to be mastered.) Give special attention to the beginning and end of each sentence and of each paragraph. Often you need only the first and last sentence of a paragraph to get the whole thought. Authors have different habits in this matter, and you will do well to discover in each assignment whether summary sentences are used and whether they ordinarily occur at the beginning or end of paragraphs. Where a book has printed marginal notes or paragraph headings or a detailed table of contents, you can use these to great advantage in skimming the book.

4. Test yourself every few days to see what progress you are making in speeding up. Take some book of moderate difficulty and see how many pages you can read in fifteen minutes, *without losing any of the essential thought*. After a few days' practice in speeding up your reading, give yourself another fifteen-minute test in the same book. Continue to do this and keep careful records of your results. To make sure that you are getting the essential thought, write down your idea of what you have read and then compare these notes with the original material. Keeping note of your actual progress in this way will help you greatly in your determination to improve. You will find a marked increase in your ability to read rapidly and still get the *meaning* of what you read.

CHAPTER VIII

CLASSROOM STUDY METHODS: LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING

The classroom is a place to learn, not a place to demonstrate what you have already learned. Aside from your reading, the most important part of your college studying is in the classroom. You need to form good classroom habits as well as good reading habits.

Some rules that will help in your classwork follow:

1. Ascertain the teaching method in each of your classes and guide your activities accordingly. Different classes are conducted in different ways and the student must adopt methods appropriate to his several classes. The contrast is especially striking between the lecture method and the discussion method. But beyond this broad division there are many other variations—difference in the kind of lectures and discussions, and differences in the personality and the requirements of the instructors. Lectures may be presentations of material that is not in your books; they may supplement your texts; or they may merely repeat, in different form, what you have read. Again, they may aim primarily to present problems, applications, and criticisms of your reading; or they may be principally inspirational and stimulating. Obviously your method of listening and note-taking will differ in these different cases.

Similar variety exists in classes not given over to lectures. The instructor may quiz you or he may expect you to contribute to the discussion without being questioned. He may discuss only points on which you

have already prepared, or he may discuss matters that are not in your regular assignments. You must be alive to all these possibilities. *You must adapt yourself to the instructor and his methods if you are to profit most from the classroom work.*

In spite of the diversity of classroom work, some rules can be laid down that are of general applicability. In the main, they run parallel to the rules for effective reading.

2. Think about the subject-matter for the day, before class. Prepare your mind. Recall the main points of your reading. Review your notes from the day before. Think of the questions and problems that arose during your preparation of the assigned material. The minutes preceding the class hour can be used to excellent advantage—not for cramming the details of your lesson but for thinking over the topic as a whole and for formulating the difficulties and issues of the subject.
3. During the class period, think all around the points raised in the lecture or discussion. Go beyond that which is presented. Keep recalling related points from your reading and experience. Tie together ideas that had been drifting about. Think critically of the conclusions and views that are expressed. Ask questions. Make each idea prove its soundness.

Above everything, be *active* in your listening. Passive absorption is impossible. The capable listener thinks far ahead of the speaker. Train yourself to anticipate what is coming. Debate mentally with the speaker. See what difficulties there are in his reasoning. Pick out the essential ideas and link them to your previous thinking in the subject. If the discussion is dull and uninteresting, occupy your thinking with a deeper and broader inquiry into the topic. Good students do some of their most penetrating and creative thinking during the "dry" parts of their classes.

4. Concentrate on the topic of discussion. Check every tendency toward mind-wandering. Pull yourself back sharply when your mind rambles off to irrelevant matters. The best way to avoid daydreaming and wandering attention is to follow the advice of rule 3. Keep your mind active with thoughts about the subject being presented. Note-taking will also aid in combating tendencies toward mind-wandering. But the greatest thing is your earnest effort. Resolve to stop immediately every train of idle thoughts.
5. Take notes on the important points. The kind of notes you take will be determined in large measure by the nature of the classroom work. It is important for you to consider carefully what your note-taking policy will be, and then to carry it out to the letter. A few hints that may be helpful follow:

a) Where the class period is devoted to questions and discussions, take relatively few notes and fit these into your reading notes. Usually you will need to jot down only the conclusions of a discussion or a few words to indicate the answer to a problem that bothered you. These notes can often be placed to best advantage directly in your book, beside the question or paragraph to which they refer. If the instructor ordinarily summarizes long discussions or adds new material to that of the book, you may find it valuable to take notes on cards or in a notebook.

Avoid long notes. Keep your attention free for thought on the subjects discussed. Thinking through a problem yourself is infinitely better than getting someone else's answer neatly written in your notes.

b) Where the lecture method is used, you will need to take more notes than in the case of class discussions. How detailed your notes are to be will depend upon the kind of lectures and upon your own best method of

study. In general, *make your notes as brief as is practicable*. Keep your mind free to think over the points of the lecture. Understanding the lecture clearly is your primary aim; notes are secondary.

If a lecture is clearly organized, cast your notes directly into the form of the lecture. The instructor may give you an outline of his points, or he may present his subject in such clear-cut divisions that you can easily form an outline. Your notes should be a skeleton of the lecture. Arrange main heads and subheads in accordance with some definite plan and system of symbols. It is wise to go over your notes soon after they are taken, thinking of the points and their interrelation and making necessary revisions.

Many lectures do not fall into a clear outline form. Often the best you can do is to jot down important or striking points in the order in which they are mentioned, even though they do not fit into a general scheme. With notes of this sort you will find it especially important to re-write and organize the material very soon after the lecture. While the points are still fresh in your thinking the notes will have meaning and can be written up in full; a day or two later they would be of little use.

6. **Use your notes after class each day.** Read over your notes and think about the points on the same day they are taken. See wherein the notes agree and disagree with your reading and your previous impressions. Follow up each point that is not entirely clear, through further reading, thinking, discussion, and consultation with the instructor. Remember that your notes are useful only to the extent that you can put meaning into them. The way to make notes meaningful is to work over them carefully and thoroughly while the material is still fresh and easily recalled.

CHAPTER IX

AIDS IN MEMORIZING

Memorizing a lesson is often contrasted with mastering it. The use of thought and the use of memory are viewed as alternatives. This is misleading. Understanding a point always involves the *remembering* of related ideas and facts. In order to think, you must have some materials of thought—materials furnished by memory. Remembering the significant points of a lesson is a necessary part of the mastering of it.

The common feeling against the use of memory in study arises because memory is thought of as mechanical or rote memory—a process of “learning by heart.” But this is only part, and the less important part, of our remembering. Memory of connected and meaningful ideas, of material that has been understood and thought about, is clearly a most important part of all effective study. A lesson is never mastered without a great deal of remembering—logical remembering.

Thinking is given first place in discussions of how to study and memory is little mentioned simply because the remembering takes care of itself. Memory, in short, is a by-product of thoughtful study. *The rules that previous chapters have given for improving methods of reading and learning are at the same time rules for better remembering.* Almost the only way that improvements can be made in memory, as a matter of fact, is through the use of better methods of learning.

Here are some brief rules for improving your ability to remember:

1. Get the *meaning* of the idea to be remembered. Make sure that you clearly understand the material. Think about it and tie it to as many other ideas as you can. Form a variety of associations among the ideas. Look at the new material from all sides. Think of illustrations and applications of the facts and principles; inquire into causes and effects; see if there are exceptions or difficulties. The richer the associations, the better the memory.
2. Go over the material to be remembered again and again. Repetition of ideas strengthens the associations among them. The stronger the associations, the better the memory.
3. Keep actively attentive; avoid mechanical repetition. *Think* about the material you are trying to learn each time you go over it. Taking notes and talking to yourself or to a fellow-student about it will also help. Merely reading over the words will not enable you to remember. Bring yourself back sharply when you begin drifting in this passive fashion.
4. Learn with the intention of recalling. You can remember better if you study with a definite expectation of recalling or using what you are studying. Intend to remember, however, not simply for recitation the next day but for permanent use.
5. Stop frequently during your studying and make yourself recall the things you are learning. A large part of your study time should be spent in recalling the ideas you have read. When you cannot recall, turn back and refresh your memory. Then practice recall of the whole topic again. Repeat this process until you have really mastered the material.

6. **Have confidence in your ability to remember.** Forgetting is often due to your being "fussed" and nervous. After you have once mastered a topic, trust yourself to remember it. The confidence itself will aid the remembering.
7. **When facts have no logical connection, form some arbitrary associations to help remember them.** The need for this is rare. Almost any facts worth remembering at all can be organized into some logical and sensible form. These meaningful or logical associations are much the better sort. Especially in remembering names and numbers, however, logical connections are often absent. Many memory aids and devices have been proposed for such matters (jingles for the number of days in the months, and names of the presidents, etc.). The advertised "memory training systems" have elaborate codes which are usually far more trouble than they are worth. Your own self-made associations are more economical.

CHAPTER X

CRAMMING AND EXAMINATIONS

Cramming is good or bad depending on what is meant by it. If it refers to feverish last-minute efforts to memorize masses of material which should have been learned during the course, it is decidedly harmful. It serves only to give some confused smatterings of the subject. Even the fragments of knowledge that are acquired in this eleventh-hour dash will be quickly forgotten. They will be of little lasting use. Cramming is no substitute for faithful daily work during the course.

If cramming is interpreted as meaning a strenuous review at the close of a course, it has much to recommend it. You can do a great deal to refresh your memory and to note the interrelations of topics by running over the main ideas that have been dealt with. If you have notes from your books and class discussions, use these in review. If your notes are not adequate, skim through your textbook to get a bird's-eye view of the course. Then think over each main topic, trying to recall as much as you can and turning to the book for further light when necessary.

Two rules are especially important:

1. Review the main points; get a skeleton view of the subject; avoid memorizing details. Get the main ideas and think about these long enough to see how the details are to be organized under them. The specific examples and facts will be readily recalled if you are

clear as to the way they fit into general conclusions and points of view.

2. Give yourself plenty of time for reviewing: avoid high-pressure reviewing at the last minute. Do your reviewing early; Begin reviewing the whole course at least a week or two before examinations. Leave only a few finishing touches for the day before the examinations. Do not cram at all on the day of the examination.

Several hints may be added of points to bear in mind in taking examinations:

1. Be cool and self-confident. Trust your memory. Reassure yourself by recalling the care with which you have reviewed and the general understanding of the course which you know you have. Recall, too, that instructors are human and do not give examinations so difficult that students having a fair grasp of the course need fear.
2. Read over the whole set of examination questions and think about each one long enough to understand it. The questions often have some relation to one another and your ideas on one question may help with another question. You also gain an idea of the time to give to each question. The ability to plan your answers and to provide time for all the questions is no less important than the ability to answer the separate questions.
3. Read each question very carefully before beginning to answer it. Make certain that you have the real point of the question. Think around it for a time before deciding finally how you will approach it.
4. Make mental (or written) outlines of your answers. Outlining will help you immensely in getting a complete and rounded answer to each question. A well-organized

answer also does wonders in convincing the instructor that you have mastered the topic.

5. Reserve time to go over your answers and make necessary changes. A re-reading of your examination will often enable you to catch places where you did not make your meaning clear and places where you can add to the thought or modify it to advantage.

CHAPTER XI

PUTTING ONE'S KNOWLEDGE TO USE

Only one general rule is set forth in this chapter, but it is the most important of all rules for effective study. Briefly, it is this:

Study actively. Learn by doing. Use your knowledge by thinking, talking, and writing about the things you are learning.

If you are asked why you study, you probably give the obvious answer that your studies will be *useful*; you expect to *profit* by the knowledge and methods of work that you acquire. If you have in mind a broad enough definition of what is useful, your reply is entirely sound. You will apply the things you learn, not merely in making a success of your vocation, but also in all your thinking, talking, writing, and your conduct of the most varied sorts. You are using your knowledge when you think through new problems or draw new conclusions. You are using your knowledge when you give advice or information to your friends or discuss issues with them. You are using your knowledge in writing, in planning, in taking action in social and political affairs—in *everything* that you do. The one great aim of all your study is increased efficiency of thought and action through putting your knowledge and skill to use.

The using of knowledge is not only the *aim* of your studying; it is, in addition, *the very essence of the study process itself*. Knowledge is not something that you can

absorb and hold for later use. Knowledge is acquired only through thinking and doing. The material in books becomes part of your mental equipment just so far as you succeed in tying it to the rest of your knowledge—so far, that is, as you *use* your ideas in relation to one another.

Bernard Shaw somewhere remarks: “If you teach a man anything he will never learn it.” More bluntly the common saying has it: “We learn through doing.” Learning, in other words, is an *active* process. To acquire new ideas means always to react to them, to put them to use, to reason about them; to talk and write about them, to act upon them.

A few specific bits of advice may now be given that fall under the general rule:

1. Think of illustrations and concrete examples to which your new knowledge applies. Ideas that you read or hear will remain empty words unless you put into them some familiar concrete contents. In your studying, force yourself continually to find specific illustrations and applications.
2. Compare new ideas with the knowledge you already have. Criticize and evaluate opposed views. Use the new material in re-examining your earlier conclusions. You can make ideas part of your own thinking by using them to mold and polish other ideas. Your knowledge in this way becomes tested and sound. This putting ideas to use best prepares them for further use in thought and action.
3. Use your knowledge to explain facts and to foresee consequences. Inquire what other facts are causally related to the present one. Interrelate and organize your knowledge. Think of the causes and probable consequences of the facts you are studying. The habit

of using new ideas in looking ahead and in thinking out the logical implications of facts is a most important way of putting your knowledge to use.

4. Put your ideas on paper: make outlines; write essays; draw diagrams. Writing is one important aid in keeping active toward your studies. It also affords a valuable way to *use* your ideas. Many men do their best thinking in the process of putting things on paper.
5. Take every opportunity to talk over the things you are learning—in class-discussions, with your classmates and instructors, with family and friends. Talking often helps remarkably in clarifying ideas. Teaching a subject is said to be the best way of learning it. Find someone to whom you can explain the matters you are learning or someone with whom you can talk over the main points of your study.
6. Apply your knowledge in action. Put the principles you learn into practice. An excellent example is the material contained in this booklet. Knowledge of how to study is worthless unless you *use* the ideas in improving your actual study methods. Many of the things you learn in your school studies are similarly applicable to your actual conduct—from rules of English composition to methods of scientific research, and from knowledge of accounting practices to psychological hints on the control of emotions. In all your studying, adopt the policy of applying your knowledge as much as possible and as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY OF RULES FOR EFFECTIVE STUDY

The more important rules and suggestions contained in the preceding chapters are briefly restated here. Stop and think carefully of each point. When you come to a rule that you have not been applying, take special note of it and refer to the chapter where it was discussed. Remember, above everything, that the rules are useful only as you persistently apply them day after day. Forming good habits of study takes time; you must hammer away steadily to produce results.

The rules follow:

1. **Feel intensely the desire to master your studies** and resolve that you *will* master them. Build up definite ambitions; appreciate your duties and responsibilities; recognize the consequences of poor work and the rewards of good work.
2. **Carry your resolutions into practice.** The following methods will help:
 - a) Think frankly of the larger consequences of success or failure in the task before you.
 - b) Make your task definite and keep this one job clearly before you.
 - c) Begin work! Get set for study. Go through the motions.
 - d) Concentrate on the subject. Check every tendency to daydream. Guard against mind-wandering and pull yourself back sharply on every occasion.

3. Develop interest in your subjects of study. To do this,
 - a) Acquire information about the subject.
 - b) Tie the new information to old matters of interest.
 - c) Make the new material *personal*. Relate it to matters of concern to *you*.
 - d) *Use* the new knowledge.
4. Avoid all distractions that interfere with your studying—noise, glare of lights, uncomfortable feelings, strains, too great relaxation, and so on.
5. Arrange a fixed daily program of study. Plan your work. Cultivate systematic habits as regards the time and the place for your studies.
6. Develop effective methods of reading.
 - a) Think about the topic of study before beginning to read. Prepare your mind. Review your notes from the day before.
 - b) Obtain a preliminary impression of a book or reading by referring to the preface, table of contents, etc.
 - c) Read rapidly through your assignment first, to get a bird's-eye view of the whole.
To learn to read rapidly:
 - (1) Keep forcing yourself to speed up by continual effort.
 - (2) Read phrases and sentences, not words.
 - (3) Skip wisely; read only parts of sentences and paragraphs.
 - d) Read your assignment a second time more slowly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully. Some specific rules are:
 - (1) Keep the purpose and plan of the reading in mind as you read.
 - (2) Stop at the end of each paragraph and *think* about the point. Look at the ideas from all sides. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the thought.

- (3) Read important and difficult points slowly.
Read the familiar and unimportant points rapidly.
 - (4) Think critically while you read. Draw your own conclusions. Go beyond the book.
 - e) Make note of the important points in your reading. Mark your book or take notes. Summarize the principal thoughts and jot them down. Use your notes in review each day.
 - f) Make a mental or written outline of the whole reading. Think over this organized outline of the topic before leaving the book or reading.
 - g) Be certain your knowledge is clear and "thought through." Avoid vague and muddy thinking. Get a few fundamental ideas *clearly*, whatever else you get or fail to get.
7. Develop effective methods of classroom work.
- a) Ascertain the teaching method in each of your classes and guide your classroom activities accordingly.
 - b) Think about the subject-matter for the day, before class. Prepare your mind. Review the work of the preceding day.
 - c) During the class period, think all around the points raised in the lecture or discussion. Go beyond that which is presented, but—
 - d) Concentrate on the general topic of discussion. Check every tendency toward mind-wandering or daydreaming.
 - e) Take notes on the important points. But remember that the first thing is to *understand* the ideas; getting them down on paper is secondary.
 - (i) Where the class period is devoted to questions and discussions, take relatively few notes and fit these into your reading notes.

- (2) Where the lecture method is used, get a skeleton outline of the lecture or a set of notes covering the main points. Re-write and organize your notes while the subject-matter is still fresh in your thinking.
 - f) Use your notes after class each day. Think over points which are not clear and seek further light from books and from your instructor.
8. Improve your ability to remember by adopting better methods of learning. Specifically—
- a) Get the *meaning* of the idea to be remembered.
 - b) Go over the material to be remembered again and again.
 - c) Keep actively attentive; avoid mechanical repetitions.
 - d) Learn with the intention of recalling.
 - e) Stop frequently during your studying and make yourself recall the things you are learning.
 - f) Have confidence in your ability to remember.
 - g) When facts have no logical connection, form some arbitrary associations to help remember them.
9. In reviewing for examinations—
- a) Review the main points; get a skeleton view of the subject; avoid memorizing scattered details.
 - b) Do your reviewing early. Avoid high-pressure cramming at the last minute.
10. In taking examinations—
- a) Be cool and self-confident. Reassure yourself. Trust your memory.
 - b) Read over the whole set of examination questions and think about each one long enough to understand it.
 - c) Read each question very carefully before beginning to answer it.

- d) Make mental or written outlines of your answers.
 - e) Go over your answers if you have time and make necessary changes.
- II. **Study actively.** Use your knowledge by thinking, talking, and writing about the things you are learning. Apply your knowledge as much as possible and as soon as possible.

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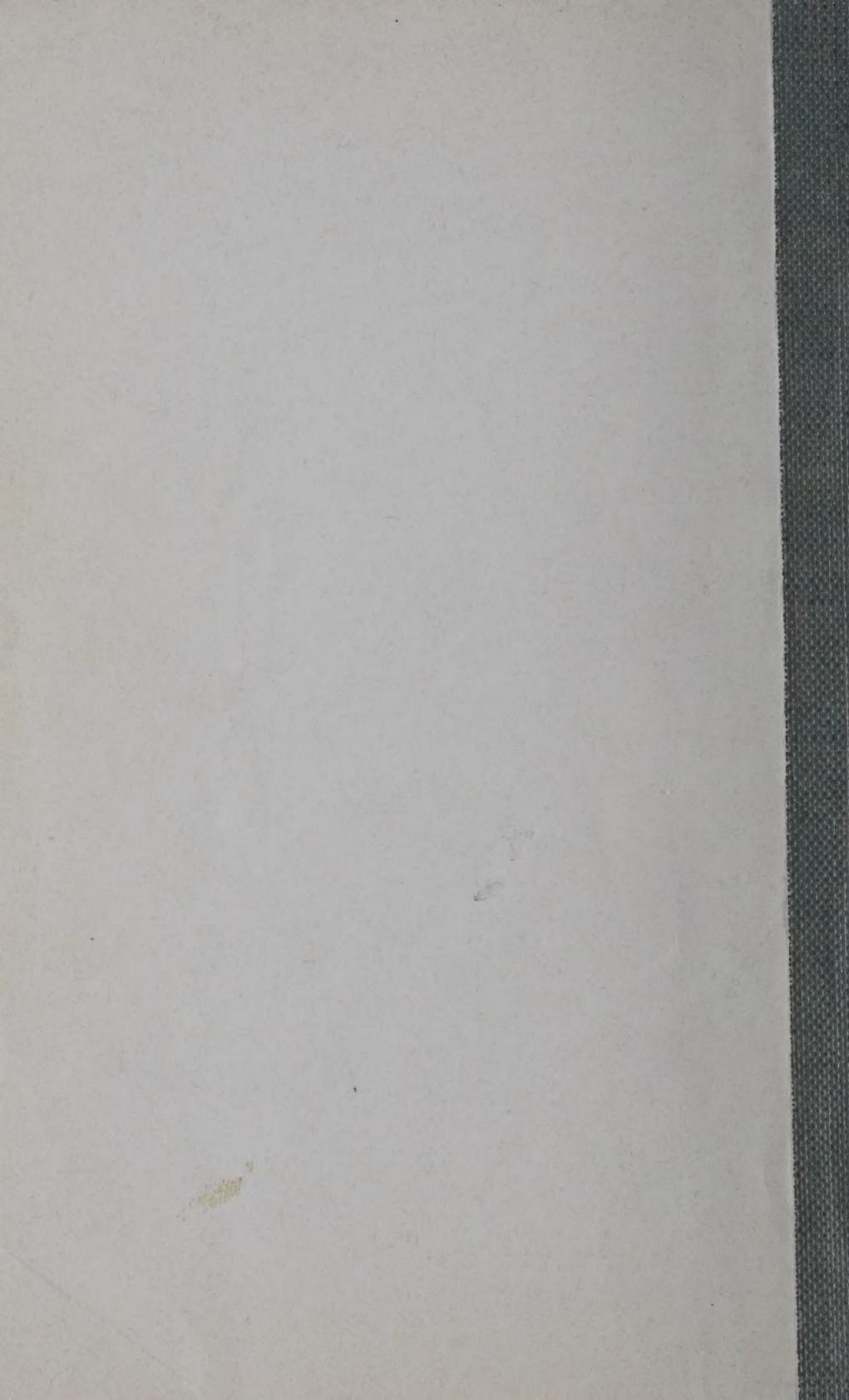
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